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LEIGHTON

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In the Same Series

Artist.	Author.
VELAZQUEZ.	S. L. Bensusan.
REYNOLDS.	S. L. Bensusan.
TURNER.	C. Lewis Hind.
ROMNEY.	C. Lewis Hind.
GREUZE.	Alys Eyre Macklin.
BOTTICELLI.	Henry B. Binns.
ROSSETTI.	Lucien Pissarro.
BELLINI.	George Hay.
FRA ANGELICO.	James Mason.
REMBRANDT.	Josef Israels.
LEIGHTON.	A. Lys Baldry.
RAPHAEL.	Paul G. Konody.
HOLMAN HUNT.	Mary E. Coleridge.
WATTS.	W. Loftus Hare.
TITIAN.	S. L. Bensusan.
CARLO DOLCI.	George Hay.
LUINI.	James Mason.
TINTORETTO.	S. L. Bensusan.

Others in Preparation.

PLATE I.—"AND THE SEA GAVE UP THE DEAD WHICH WERE IN IT."—Rev. xx. 13. (Frontispiece)

(At the Tate Gallery, London)

This panel was intended to form part of a scheme of decoration for the Dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and is interesting as an example of Leighton's methods of design. Both in subject and mode of treatment it departs markedly from the customary direction of his paintings, but its largeness of style and imaginative power give it an important place in the series of his works.

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LEIGHTON

BY A. LYS BALDRY

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT
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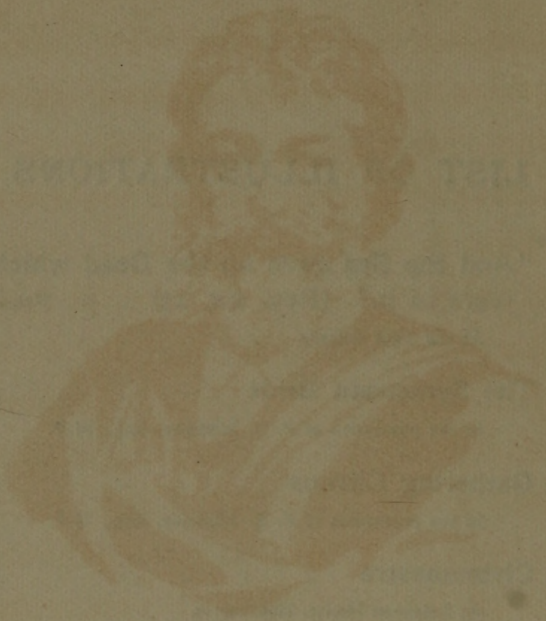

IT is true that a definite connection can almost always be traced between the temperament of an artist and the work that he produces. One of the first things that must be taken into account in any study of his achievement is the manner of his training during the most impressionable years of his

boyhood. Youthful associations and surroundings must obviously have a very real influence upon the direction in which any man develops in after life, and much of his later success or failure must depend upon the kind of cultivation that is given at the outset to his natural tastes and instinctive preferences. Everything which helps to define his personality, or to shape his character, has an actual bearing upon his ultimate efficiency as a producer, and counts for something in the building up of his scheme of active existence; the discipline of a judicious up-bringing puts his temperament under the control of his intelligence, and by pointing the way in which he can best apply his powers, saves him from wasting his energies in unprofitable experiment. He starts his career with a knowledge of himself, and with confidence in his personal

qualifications for the profession he has chosen; and this confidence enables him to use his individuality not only to his own advantage, but for the benefit of other men as well.

It would not be easy to find a better instance of this connection between the artist's personality and the character of his performance than is afforded by the life and practice of Lord Leighton, nor one which marks more definitely the effect produced by early associations and training. Indeed, to understand his art at all, it is necessary to trace from his childhood the sequence of events by which the trend of his æsthetic convictions was determined, and to follow, step by step, the evolution of that creed in which he retained, to the end, the fullest and most absolute faith. He was no opportunist in art matters, momentary fashions

did not affect him, and he did not yield to the temptation, which many artists are unable to resist, to make experiments in unaccustomed directions; what he once believed he believed always, and neither his catholicity of taste, nor his generous toleration of methods of practice quite opposed to his own, had any effect upon the consistency of his effort. What he conceived to be his mission he fulfilled to the utmost, and there is no plainer proof of his strength than the firmness of his adherence to the course which he had decided at the outset was the one he ought to follow.

Leighton does not seem to have owed to heredity any of his particular gifts as an artist. His father and grandfather were both medical men, and, during several generations preceding his birth, no member of his family appears to have possessed more

PLATE II.—THE SYRACUSAN BRIDE

(The plate represents the centre portion of the picture, now in the possession of Mr. Mildmay, M.P., at Ivybridge)

A typical example of the artist's earlier manner—characteristically suave in line arrangement and dignified in effect—this picture shows well how he could manage the intricacies of an elaborate composition. The decorative beauty of the whole design and the grace of individual figures can be sincerely admired.

than an ordinary degree of taste in art matters. Yet the desire for the pictorial expression of his ideas was one of the first of his childish inclinations; and in 1839, before he was ten years old—he was born at Scarborough on December 3, 1830—this desire had become so strong that his parents began seriously to consider whether it ought not to be accepted by them as determining the profession which he was eventually to follow. Their final decision on the subject was postponed for some years longer, for they felt the need for caution lest his powers should prove to be insufficient to justify them in consenting that he should become a professional artist. But meanwhile his father, himself a man of culture and a lover of the classics, determined that the boy should receive a good general education, and that, though art teaching

was not to be denied to him, it should be one only of the subjects in which he was to be trained.

So for the next four or five years his work was very judiciously varied. In 1840 he had gone with his parents to Rome, and during the two years he remained there he had regular drawing-lessons from Signor Meli. Then came a year spent partly at Dresden and partly at Berlin, which gave him further opportunities for art study, a short stay during 1843 at a school at Frankfort, and another move, in 1844, to Florence. This wandering life under his father's guidance was of no small advantage to him, for it not only offered him chances of becoming acquainted with various types of art, but enabled him to acquire that command of languages which was of so much service to him in his after

career. It gave him, too, a wide experience of people and things such as comes seldom enough to a lad of his age, and had undoubtedly a very valuable influence upon his mental development.

It was in Florence that the question whether he was or was not to be an artist was finally decided. His father sought the advice of Hiram Powers, the American sculptor, to whom he showed examples of the boy's work and asked whether he should "make him an artist." When Powers declared that Nature had done that already, and, in answer to further questioning as to young Leighton's chances of success, said that he would become as eminent as he pleased, the parental doubts and hesitation came to an end. Immediate steps were taken to give him a grounding in the rudiments of the profession which

opened up to him such brilliant prospects. His general education still went on, but he was allowed time for special study, and not only entered the Accademia delle Belle Arti at Florence, but also set to work to study anatomy under Zanetti at the hospital in that city; and on these lines his training was continued for some little while.

When he left Florence it was to return to his school at Frankfort, where he remained till he was nearly seventeen, and then he spent a year in the Städtlesches Institut there. He moved next to Brussels, where he came in contact with Wiertz and Gallait, and then for a few months to Paris, to worship at the shrine of Ingres and Ary Scheffer. But during this period his art work was carried on without the systematic direction of any master, and

though on his travels he had picked up much useful knowledge, and had acquired sufficient confidence in himself to attempt two or three pictures of some importance, he felt at last the need for real discipline. So at the end of 1849 he left Paris, and returned to Frankfort to put himself under the rigid rule of Steinle, a master from whom he knew that he would receive just the drilling which was necessary to bring his somewhat errant youthful fancies under proper control.

Steinle was an artist who had little sympathy with those redundancies of style which were at that time characteristic of the Florentine school. He was a believer in severity of manner, in formality and strict simplicity, and that Leighton should have chosen him as the one man from whom he desired to receive tuition is proof

enough that the young artist was fully conscious of the deficiencies in his own early performance. With this consciousness to spur him on it can well be imagined that the two years he spent with Steinle were not wasted; he worked hard, and if he had to unlearn much that he had learned before, he acquired thereby a sounder judgment of the relative value of different forms of practice, and added largely to his knowledge of technical processes. He had, during his earlier wanderings from place to place, seen and studied many phases of art, and he had gathered impressions with what was, perhaps, rather dangerous facility; to bring this mass of oddly assorted information into proper shape, and to sift out from it what had real value, was a task in which he needed the assistance of a disciplinarian with high ideals and firm

convictions. He had full confidence in Steinle's judgment, and though his own æsthetic creed was even then too clearly defined to be changed in essentials by the asceticism of his master, he responded readily to the suggestions of a man who could show him plainly just where the extravagances of this creed required to be curbed, and how what was best in it could most fitly be developed.

He left Frankfort in the autumn of 1852 and went to live at Rome; and soon after he had settled there he commenced the picture which was destined, on its appearance at the Royal Academy in 1855, to put him instantly among the most prominent of the artists of his time. In this picture —"Cimabue's Madonna carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence"— he not only summarised all his previous

experience, but forecasted what was to be his artistic direction during the rest of his life. Though he had painted other canvases before, and exhibited them at Frankfort, it was with this one that his career as an artist of admitted distinction really began. It introduced him dramatically to the British public; it was bought by Queen Victoria—a fact which immediately advertised its importance to art lovers in this country—and it amply justified the hopes and expectations as to his future, which had been formed by his many friends abroad and by the judges who had had opportunities of estimating the value of his student work. This was the picture which Thackeray had seen in progress at Rome, and which, by the impression it made upon him, induced him to tell Millais that he had come across "a versatile young dog

PLATE III.—GATHERING CITRONS

(In the possession of Mr. Mildmay, M.P.)

Few of Leighton's paintings of Eastern subjects illustrate better than this one the certainty and precision of his draughtsmanship and his power of dealing with architectural details. But this "Old Damascus — Jews' Quarter" — as it was called when it was first exhibited in 1874—is much more than a simple study of architecture; it sums up many of the artist's best qualities as a craftsman and a shrewd observer of Nature.

who will run you hard for the presidentship one day"—a much-quoted prophecy of which we have had since the complete fulfilment.

But in an analysis of Leighton's art this famous composition claims a place of even greater importance than in the historical summary of his life's work. That it has faults in draughtsmanship, and that in certain details its composition is open to criticism, can be frankly admitted; these defects, however, are but what might have been expected in so ambitious an effort by an artist whose years did not number more than four-and-twenty, and who necessarily lacked that comprehensive grasp of executive processes which comes only with long experience and exhaustive practice in the mechanism of painting. When the circumstances of its production are taken

into account it must always rank as one of the most triumphant demonstrations of youthful genius which have ever been recorded. That its reception at the 1855 Academy was really enthusiastic can well be understood; it must have come as a welcome surprise to the people who were growing impatient of the atmosphere of mediocrity by which at that period nearly the whole of British art was pervaded.

Now, the significance of such an example of Leighton's early achievement is made more emphatic by comparison with the long series of his later works. At twenty-four the Italian influence was strong upon him, and the impressions of his boyhood, modified but not effaced by the teaching of Steinle, had still power to control his artistic intelligence. The triviality of Italian art, its love of detail, and its

seeking after superficialities of expression, did not appeal to him, but in its sumptuousness and sensuous charm he found something with which he could fully sympathise. In yielding to this sympathy, however, he was kept by his fastidious taste and innate love of refinement from running to extremes. He worked in the Italian spirit, but the spirit was that of the older masters rather than that of the modern men, and even then it underwent a kind of transmutation in his mind. For the greater qualities of the picture were not simply the outcome of his imitation of the mannerisms of the school to which at that time he belonged by association, rather were they due to his personal conception of the functions which the imaginative painter was called upon to fulfil—to an independent belief which was capable

of being asserted in many ways. This belief, formed in his early manhood, persisted, indeed, in all its essentials to the end of his days, and was as surely evidenced in his later classicism as in the first few examples of his Italian adaptations.

It was founded upon the idea that a work of art to be really great must be rightly decorative, that whatever the pictorial motive chosen, it must be treated as the basis of a studied arrangement of form and colour, and must be brought as near to perfection of design as is possible by the exercise of all the devices of craftsmanship. Leighton undoubtedly saw in decoration the only permissible application of painting, but he saw also that decoration could be made much more than a narrow and unreal convention, and that so

far from hampering the artist with high ideals, it offered him the greatest opportunities of satisfying his aspirations. He appreciated, too, the fact that the most exquisite naturalism could be attained in every part of a picture which was designed purely to express an ideal fancy. Therefore, he did not hesitate to select, for many of his most exactly reasoned compositions, subjects which had either an historical allusion, or which illustrated some myth or legend. He was so sure of the principle of his art that he did not fear that in telling the story, and in embroidering it with a wealth of minutely perfected detail, he would lose the vitality or the purity of his decoration.

To this confidence was due emphatically both the power and the charm of the Cimabue picture. The subject, in itself

merely episodical, was one capable of just that refinement of design, and balance of colour, which the decorator who is adequately conscious of his responsibility regards as indispensable; and Leighton, spurred to emulation by the noble examples of decorative painting with which he had been familiar from his childhood, and endowed with a just appreciation of his own great gifts, had no hesitation in attempting to turn this incident from art history into a painting which would be an avowal of all the articles of his æsthetic creed, and a profession of the faith to which he had sworn allegiance. It is characteristic of his courage that he should have chosen to make in this manner his first appearance in an English exhibition; a man of less independence would probably have hesitated to stake so much

upon a piece of work which, by the very frankness of its revelation of the artist's intention to go his own way, was quite as likely to excite opposition as to be received with approval. But it was no part of his scheme of existence to tout for popularity by coming down to a lower level, and he valued consistency more than the adulation of the public.

Indeed, by his very next picture, "The Triumph of Music," which was exhibited in 1856, he brought himself into conflict with the critics and students of what was accepted as correct art. "The Triumph of Music" represented Orpheus playing a violin to Pluto and Proserpine, and the combination of figures from a classic story with an instrument invented only in the Middle Ages was resented by every one who did not understand, or did not sympathise

with the artist's decorative and symbolical intention. But in this instance also he was following the lead of the great Italian masters, who had provided him with many precedents for such a pictorial combination; and it is quite probable that he knew beforehand what would be the effect upon a modern public of his attempt to give new life to an ancient tradition. At least, he proved that he was quite ready to go to all necessary lengths in his advocacy of freedom of practice, and showed that he was not likely to enrol himself among the conventionalists and the followers of the mid-Victorian fashion.

This picture was painted in Paris, whither he had gone in the autumn of 1855. He made that city his headquarters for some two years during which he worked assiduously, and found many friends among the

PLATE IV.—CLYTEMNESTRA

(At Leighton House, Kensington)

The strength and statuesque dignity of this figure are not less remarkable than the power with which the subject as a whole is suggested. The picture has a wonderful degree of dramatic effect, and is especially impressive in its reticence and scholarly restraint. The admirable drawing of the draperies should be particularly noted.

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leaders of French art. In 1858 he stayed for a time in London, and by coming in contact with some of the younger painters, who were then contributing an important chapter to our art history—with men like Millais, Rossetti, and Holman Hunt—he obtained a closer insight into certain artistic movements of which, while abroad, he had probably heard but the faintest echoes. By this time the Pre-Raphaelite rebellion had produced its effect and was not in need of his support, but it may fairly be assumed that, if the need had arisen, he would have been on the side of those who were fighting for the emancipation of British art.

In the following year he was again in Italy, and during the spring he worked in Capri; it was there that he executed that marvellous drawing of the "Lemon Tree,"

which has always, and with justice, been counted among his masterpieces; but in 1860 he decided to settle in London, and established himself in Orme Square, Bayswater. Life in London did not, however, mean that his excursions to other countries were to be abandoned, he continued regularly to spend some months in each year in travel abroad, and he visited in succession Spain, Damascus, Egypt, and other parts of the East, besides renewing his acquaintance with many places which he had seen before. These wanderings were always productive; they added much to his stock of material, and the results of them are embodied in a number of his pictures, as well as in that long series of open air sketches which show how sensitive he was to the beauty of nature, and how delicately he could interpret her moods.

Four years after Leighton became a British artist, by residence as well as by birth, he was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy. In this same year, 1864, he exhibited a picture, "Golden Hours," which is notable as one of the most successful examples of his Italian manner. But though the memories of his youth were still powerful, and had, even at that date, an influence upon his art, there was a definite change coming over his practice. Whether this change was due to closer contact with the traditions of English painting, or simply to the inevitable maturing of his convictions as he drew near to middle age, it is hard to say; but certainly as years went on he inclined more and more away from the sumptuousness of Italy, towards the purer and less emotional dignity of Greece. He sought more per-

sistently for the classic atmosphere, his idealism became more severe, and his decoration more reticent, and he turned more frequently for his subjects to the Greek myths. As an illustration of his new view, it is interesting to compare his "Syracusan Bride leading Wild Animals for Sacrifice to the Temple of Diana," exhibited in 1866, with the "Cimabue's Madonna," by which his reputation had been established eleven years before. Both are processional compositions of large size, both have the same sort of decorative intention; but while there is in the first some kind of story, and some attempt to realise the atmosphere of a particular period of history, in the second there is little more than a purely fanciful pattern of forms and colours, which is interesting solely on account of its beauty. A similar

PLATE V.—THE BATH OF PSYCHE

(At the Tate Gallery, London)

One of the most fascinating of Leighton's classic compositions. It was painted six years before his death, and represents perfectly the art of his later period, when his powers had fully matured and he had acquired complete control over refinements of practice. Exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1890. Purchased by the Chantrey Trustees in 1890.

comparison might be made between the "Dante going forth into Exile," which belongs to the same year as the "Golden Hours," and the "Venus Disrobing for the Bath" of 1867, or the "Helios and Rhodos," "Electra at the Tomb of Agamemnon," and "Dædalus and Icarus," of 1869. In this latter year he exhibited also his diploma picture, "St. Jerome in the Desert"—as he had been elected a Royal Academician in 1868—but this, a study of strong action, and vehemently dramatic in effect, is neither Italian nor classic, and belongs really to a class of art into which he only occasionally digressed. As time went on the statuesque repose of his canvases increased, and the classic severity became perceptible even when he treated subjects which had no Grecian allusion. It is quite apparent in his large picture of "Hercules

Wrestling with Death for the Body of Alcestis" (1871), though in this there is no lack of vigorous movement; it gave a particular charm to his conception of the exquisite "Summer Moon" (1872), perhaps the most perfect work he ever produced; and it is felt most of all in the vast composition, "The Daphnephoria," which, exhibited in 1876, rounds off significantly that important decade in his career which opened with the "Syracusan Bride."

Henceforth Leighton must be counted among the many artists of distinction who have, in this country, striven assiduously to keep alive the Greek tradition. He never sank into a mere pictorial archæologist, and rarely tried to produce those cold and lifeless reconstructions of ancient life which are too often put forth by painters who depend for their inspiration

upon book-learning and museum study rather than imagination. But the beauty of Greek art, its strength and delicacy, its dignity and ideal grace, absorbed him as they did Fred Walker and Albert Moore, and, like these two British masters, he allowed its influence to determine the way in which the whole of his painting was treated. Even in such pictures as "The Slinger," an Egyptian subject, or "Gathering Citrons; a Court in Damascus," which was one of the results of his Eastern travel, both of which belong to this period, he made no pretence of avoiding, for the sake of what may be called local exactness, the antique preconception; both are as evidently statuesque in design, and classic in manner, as any of his Grecian fantasies; and, to take another instance, it is instructive to note how, in his "Noble Lady of Venice," a subject

which seemingly demanded a purely Italian quality, the sumptuousness of effect has been refined and purified by a kind of simplicity of statement borrowed obviously from antique art.

It is curious, however, that in the first important piece of sculpture for which he was responsible, the "Athlete Struggling with a Python," which was at the Academy in 1877, he should have avoided almost entirely any hint of Greek spirit. This statue is essentially Italian, both in its general design and in its details of modelling. It has none of the firmness of line, and little of the largeness of method, which are so decisively characteristic of antique sculpture, and owes plainly more to Donatello than to Phidias. Yet it has great and distinguished merits, and can be placed in the company of the few great things which

have been produced in this branch of art during modern times. As an anatomical study it is most convincing, for it reveals an astonishingly complete knowledge of the construction of the human form, and is exceedingly true in its realisation of muscular action. Perhaps the chief objection that can be urged against it as a work of art is that it records an impossibility—a snake of the size represented would be more than a match for a man even with the fine physique of the athlete, and the ending of such a struggle, the difficulty of which the statue hardly suggests, would be prompt and disastrous. But Leighton's fine craftsmanship has made even an impossibility seem credible, and his work must not be condemned because it involves an error in natural history.

He exhibited another large statue, "The

Sluggard," in 1886, which, like the "Athlete Struggling with a Python," has found a permanent home in the Tate Gallery. It is again a study of action which, if less violent than that of the earlier figure, is still vigorous enough to show how well the artist understood anatomy; and it is again Italian rather than Greek. It is also open to criticism because there is an apparent contradiction between the suggestion of the title and the physical character of the "Sluggard." This well knit, muscular youth, stretching himself in an attitude of graceful freedom, could have lived no slothful life. Activity and the capacity for strong exertion are evident in every line, and his condition is too good to have been obtained without exercises which the sleepy, sluggish man would not have cared to perform. The title, indeed, is unfortunate because it implies an intention

on the artist's part to illustrate a particular motive which he has failed to express, though what he has actually given us is artistically admirable and full of noble beauty.

In the interval between 1876 and 1886 Leighton's pictorial production continued without intermission, and without any abatement in the loftiness of his aim. "The Music Lesson" (1877), "Winding the Skein" (1878), and "Nausicaa," in the same year, "Psamathe" (1880), "The Idyll" (1881), and "Cymon and Iphigenia" (1884), are all typical examples of his mature performance, and with them must be included "Cleoboulos Instructing his Daughter Cleobouline," which though an earlier picture—it was exhibited in 1871—is in style and character closely allied to the "Music Lesson." Nor must his "Phryne at Eleusis" (1882) be overlooked,

though this is scarcely one of his happiest achievements, and is a little too pedantic in style. It claims consideration chiefly for its richness of colour and fine drawing of the nude female figure.

Into this decade fall two of the greater events of his life, his election as President of the Royal Academy, and the execution of his famous wall paintings, "The Arts of War," and "The Arts of Peace," in the South Kensington Museum. On the death of Sir Francis Grant, who had held the Presidential office since 1866, Leighton was chosen, on November 13, 1878, to fill the vacant post. In making this selection, the members of the Academy did honour to a man who had raised himself, by sheer strength of personality, to a position of acknowledged leadership in the art affairs of this country, but they also secured as their President

PLATE VI.—A NOBLE LADY OF VENICE

(At Lord Armstrong's seat, Rothbury Castle, Northumberland)

As a technical exercise, searching, precise, and careful, and yet distinguished by a sumptuous breadth of effect, this memorable study of a fine type of feminine beauty takes high rank among the artist's smaller paintings. It bears most plainly the stamp of his correct and cultivated taste.

an artist who was almost ideally fitted to deal with the many responsibilities which have necessarily to be incurred by the head of such an institution. Leighton's commanding and yet attractive presence, his great power of organisation and grasp of details, his wide knowledge of the world, and his unusual capacity as a linguist, gave him not only a high degree of authority as an official, but also ensured to him the sincere confidence of those associated with him. To every one outside the Academy he was the personification of all that was best in academic art; and by his breadth of mind, his wise toleration of all types of earnest effort, and his ready sympathy with the struggling worker to whom merit had not brought success, he gained the respect and even affection of the great mass of the profession. No President since Reynolds has been so

worthy to direct the policy of the Academy, and it may fairly be said that none, Reynolds not excepted, has ruled over it with more discretion, or with better appreciation of the possibilities of the position.

The other event, the carrying out of the South Kensington wall paintings, is specially notable because in these works Sir Frederic Leighton — he received the honour of knighthood on his election as President—was able to put to legitimate uses all his capacities as a decorator, and to prove that in paintings on the largest scale he was as much a master of his craft as in the easel pictures to which, for want of greater opportunities, he was obliged to confine himself. He had made a previous experiment in this direction in 1866, when he executed the fresco of "The Wise and Foolish Virgins" in the church at Lynd-

hurst, an admirable composition treated with rare intelligence and distinctive originality; but the South Kensington lunettes were more exacting undertakings, and calculated to test his powers to the utmost. "The Arts of War" was begun towards the end of the 'seventies and took several months to finish, the companion lunette was painted two or three years later; and both of them, though some of the preliminary work was done by assistants, are substantially from his hand.

In many respects "The Arts of War" is the more satisfying performance. A scene from mediæval Italian life, it is handled with something of his earlier manner, but with an amount of breadth and freshness which he scarcely approached in his younger days. It has infinite grace without a hint of weakness, firmness with-

out formality, and style without conventionality; and it is, above all, a true decoration erring neither in the direction of excessive pictorial effect, nor in that of dull unreality. "The Arts of Peace" is less masculine and more studied, and is neither so ingenious in design, nor so happy in its grouping; though in parts it shows quite his finest art, and there are in it individual figures which are delightful examples of his masterly skill as a draughtsman. It suffers, perhaps, most of all from the want of freedom of brush-work, and from the substitution of an over-careful precision of touch for the looser and larger handling which is one of the sources of the charm of "The Arts of War." Two other decorative achievements must be added to the record of Sir Frederic's effort in this direction, the ceiling for the music-room of Mr. Marquand's house in New York, painted

in 1886, and the admirable panel, "Phœnicians Bartering with Britons," executed nine years later for the Royal Exchange.

It is greatly a matter for regret that it should be possible to include in such a meagre list practically the whole of the artist's work as a serious decoration. It is true that he was concerned in one of the many schemes which have been devised for the decoration of St. Paul's Cathedral, but this scheme was never advanced beyond the preliminary stage, and his part in it is represented only by the cartoon symbolical of the Resurrection—"And the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it"—which now hangs in the Tate Gallery. The chances which he desired were denied to him, as they were to G. F. Watts, and to other painters of like ambitions, and the world has in consequence lost much which would

have been of supreme interest. That he, with his often renewed memories of the frescoes of the Italian masters, must have felt resentment at the British indifference to this noble form of art can well be imagined. He knew that, with his aspirations, and his power, triumphs as great as any of the old painters achieved were well within his reach, but with all his earnest advocacy, even he was unable to induce the stolid patron of art to believe that an artist should be encouraged to produce anything but canvases of a convenient size, which would serve for the furnishing of modern houses.

So it comes to this, that his only commission for mural decoration on a large scale was for the two lunettes at South Kensington; the Lyndhurst fresco was a gift he made to the church, as a thank-

offering, it is said, for his recovery from an illness, and the Marquand ceiling, the Resurrection cartoon, and the Royal Exchange panel were only paintings on canvas. It is a poor record, indeed, and one of which the people in this country have every reason to feel ashamed. But the thwarting of his ambitions in one direction did not make him in others a less conscientious artist. "The Arts of Peace" was finished during 1885, and for another ten years he went on painting pictures into which he put all his love of ideal beauty, and all his striving for greater perfection of technical expression. There is certainly no diminution of power to be perceived in any of these later works, though for some while before his death he suffered increasingly from the heart trouble to which at last he succumbed on January 25, 1896.

Indeed, it was during this last ten years that some of the most memorable additions were made to the list of his successes. "The Last Watch of Hero" (1887), as charming in sentiment as in execution; the large composition, "Captive Andromache" (1888); "The Bath of Psyche" (1890), a delicate piece of fancy in his happiest manner; "Perseus and Andromeda" and "The Return of Persephone," in 1891; "The Garden of the Hesperides" (1892); "Hit" (1893); "Summer Slumber" (1894); "'Twixt Hope and Fear," and that wonderful study of glowing colour, "Flaming June," in 1895; and the "Clytie," which was at Burlington House after his death, are worthy of praise as generous and unhesitating as can be given to anything he showed before. "The Bath of Psyche" and the "Clytie" are, in fact, pictures which

PLATE VII.—ELIJAH IN THE WILDERNESS

(At the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool)

Though this canvas is scarcely typical of Leighton's usual achievement, it has a particular value as an illustration of his adaptability as a painter. The contrast between the figure of the Prophet and that of the Angel, between the rugged vigour of the man and the grace of the celestial being, is curiously effective.

have few rivals among his other works, the first because of its inimitable purity of feeling and classic refinement, the other because of its convincing force and dramatic passion. In this last effort of a dying man it is easy to find a kind of symbolical meaning: there is a pathetic significance in the attitude of the nymph who loved the light, as she kneels with arms outstretched towards the setting sun. Such a conception, and such a treatment of the subject, typify so exactly the sadness of an artist who was working actually under the shadow of death, and with full consciousness that his days were nearly numbered, that it is difficult not to look upon the "Clytie" as Leighton's farewell to the world in which he had found so much beauty and so much brightness. The sun was setting for him, and though

he was too brave a man to despair or rail at fate, his yearning for a little longer spell of sunshine was not to be repressed.

His death, which released him from sufferings that had towards the end become scarcely endurable, was the more pathetic because an honour had just been bestowed upon him which showed in a most significant fashion how highly his claims to special recognition were approved. In 1886 he had been created a baronet, and a bare month before he died he was advanced by Queen Victoria to be a peer of the United Kingdom, with the title of Baron Leighton of Stretton. It is sad, indeed, that he should not have lived to enjoy a distinction which he had so amply earned, and to use his splendid mental gifts in the wider sphere of activity which was opened up to him by accession to the peerage.

There was so much he might have done, so much he would have wished to do, to help on those artistic movements which were always first in his thoughts, that to have lost him then, just as greater opportunities of usefulness were promised than had ever before been offered to him, was an irreparable disaster for British art. As he died his last words were, "Give my love to the Academy," that institution with which he had been associated for more than thirty years, and in the service of which nearly half his life had been spent.

To most people it would seem incredible that such a career could be spoken of as anything but a success, or that an artist so respected and so honoured should not be counted among the very few to whom fate has been consistently kind. And yet to say that Leighton died a disappointed

man would not be untrue. He had been a great figure socially, he had played his part in public as an official with brilliancy and distinction, he had enjoyed the friendship of the greatest of his contemporaries, but no one knew better than he did that the popular homage was offered to his personality rather than to his art. He was conscious that he had failed to convey to the people among whom he lived that æsthetic message which was to him so vital and so urgent, and that the purpose and principle for which he always laboured remained to the end unintelligible to the world. He felt that the public attitude towards him was exactly summed up in that cynical saying with which Whistler has been credited: "Oh yes, a marvellous man! He is a great speaker, a master of many languages, a fine musician, a leader

of society; and they tell me he paints too." That which was to him the one thing worth living for seemed to every one else the last and least of his accomplishments! It is small wonder that he can be spoken of as disappointed; he had given so much for art, and in return he was recognised as nothing more than an amazingly clever man of the world, who painted pictures in his spare moments.

Yet it can be freely admitted that his work was not of the kind which was likely to appeal as a matter of course to ordinary men. It was, as has been already said, the outcome of his own temperament, and had from the first a specific character which was too personal to be wholly intelligible to people accustomed to look only at the surface of things. It must be remembered that he had naturally a very remarkable

mind, and that he received an education which was quite unlike that usually given to men who adopt the artist's profession. He had a sound basis of book-knowledge, and was taught especially to study and understand the classics, but to this was added, by his prolonged residence abroad, an intimate insight into many things which never come within the view of the majority of men, or at best are only dealt with in later life when the receptivity of youth has become dulled. He was encouraged partly by his father's precepts, partly by circumstances, to analyse and investigate, to compare this and that phase of thought and form of expression, to seek for the reasons why there should be such marked differences between the methods of workers who all professed to be advocating the same principles. Superficial information could not, and

did not, satisfy him; he had to get down to the foundation and to find out the causes for the results which were presented to him.

But of course when he came to build a system of art practice upon his early experiences, and to shape it by the aid of his analytical habit, he evolved something which most men could scarcely appraise at its full value. Therefore, his artistic purpose was persistently misunderstood and, it may be added, habitually misrepresented. His art was over the heads of his contemporaries because their tastes and sympathies had never been cultivated to his level, because their grosser preferences failed to find satisfaction in the purity of his idealism. He was absorbed always in the pursuit of beauty, which he had sought and found in many lands, and it was his

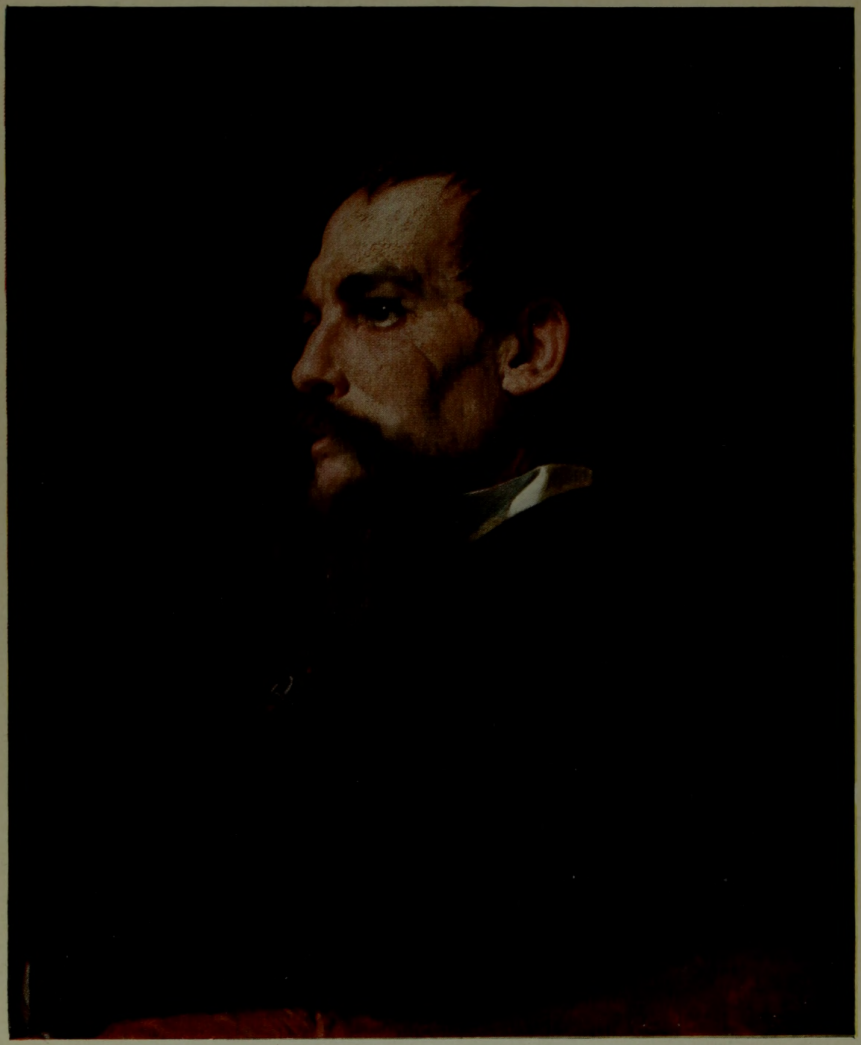
earnest desire to give to his representations of this beauty a kind of unhuman perfection, passionless, perhaps, and cold, but exquisite always in its studied refinement. No hint of coarseness or sensuality ever crept into his pictures; it would be a strangely constituted mind indeed that could find in his work any suggestiveness, or anything to gratify the baser instincts of humanity. He kept aloof from the common things of existence, and lived in a self-created paradise to which the rest of mankind could hardly hope to gain admission.

His choice of subjects, too, was made with little consideration for the prejudices or the wishes of the public. It was nothing to him that by a course of graceful sentimentality and pretty incident he could bring himself into a secure haven of popularity. All he cared for was that he should

PLATE VIII.—PORTRAIT OF SIR RICHARD BURTON

(At the National Portrait Gallery, London)

It would be no exaggeration to describe this painting of the famous explorer as one of the more notable of modern portraits, so strong is it in characterisation and so masterly in manner. The artist was fortunate in having a sitter with such a striking personality, and the sitter in being painted by a man of Leighton's deep insight and great executive power.



have scope to exercise his powers of invention, and to develop those subtleties of decoration which were, as he held, of such engrossing interest. Whether he decided upon heroic motives like the "Hercules Wrestling with Death" or "Perseus and Andromeda," upon dainty fancies like "Cleoboulos Instructing his Daughter Cleobouline," "Greek Girls Playing at Ball," or "Winding the Skein," or upon simple studies of beautiful reality like the "Noble Lady of Venice," "Kittens," or the "Idyll," to quote almost at random from the long series of his paintings which come into this last class, he never allowed himself to forget that the result was to be as nearly in accordance with his ideals as it could be made; and whether or not this result would be what the public expected was the last thing about which he concerned himself.

But it was natural after all that he should feel some measure of disappointment at the discovery that there were so few minds capable of apprehending the supreme significance of the truths which he sought to teach.

As an executant—an exponent of the craft of painting—he had certain peculiarities. His technique was precise, careful, and rather laborious, without any happy audacities of brushwork, and without any display of cleverness for its own sake. It bore some resemblance, perhaps, to that of painters like Prud'hon or Ary Scheffer, but it had more vitality, and on the whole more power. Leighton, like G. F. Watts, did not attach much importance to that ready directness of handling which is so greatly advocated by men of the modern school; the finish and elaboration of surface which

he desired were not to be obtained by treating his picture as if it were to be no more than a brilliant sketch. He aimed at exhaustive accuracy of drawing, exact correctness of modelling, the perfecting of every detail, and the equal completion of all the parts of his canvas; and this manner of working led necessarily to sacrifice of spontaneity of touch. But, on the other hand, it did not result in fumbling, or in that tentative kind of method which can be noted in the performances of artists who are uncertain of their power to solve the more serious executive problems. He had a regular system by which his pictures were built up stage by stage, and he knew perfectly well how far each stage could carry him towards the end he had in view, and how much it would contribute to the pictorial scheme he had devised. His

method was his own, and, being his own, he used to say that it was the only one which it was right for him to use, though for a man with other purposes in art, and another kind of temperament, it would probably be entirely wrong.

This mode of practice, however, served Leighton well in nearly everything he undertook. It enabled him to give charm and delicacy to his figure subjects, and wonderful virility and strength to his portraits, and in the painting of the landscapes which he so often used as backgrounds to his figure compositions, it helped him to attain an admirable serenity and breadth of effect. Where it led him astray was in his treatment of drapery, which under his deliberate method was apt to become lifeless through its very excess of realism. The masses of his draperies he designed with dignity, with

a fine sense of line, and with a proper feeling for the forms of the figure beneath, but these masses he often cut up by a multiplicity of little folds, all so precisely drawn and carefully accounted for that they conveyed to the eye a map-like impression of lines without meaning, and surfaces without modelling. He seemed to have worried over them until he had lost by needless intricacy all largeness of suggestion. But in his portraits he maintained with rare discretion the right proportion between large character, and the little things by which the individuality of a face is determined. His heads of "Sir Richard Burton" and "Professor Costa," for instance, are magnificent and give him undoubtedly a place among the masters of portraiture.

If an attempt were made to explain in a few words Leighton's position in art, it

would probably be most correct to say that he was, by instinct and habit of mind, more a sculptor than a painter. He looked at nature with a sculptor's eye, and he adopted a kind of technical process which in its progressive building up was closely akin to modelling. And if pictures like his "Phryne," his "Clytemnestra," his "Electra," and even his wholly charming "Bath of Psyche," are considered from this point of view, their resemblance to beautifully tinted sculpture is apparent enough. Even his "Cimabue's Madonna" and the "Daphnephoria" suggest bas-reliefs. That he had the sculptor's habit of mind is proved by many of his studies in which he drew a figure, or group of figures, from three or four points of view, so as to arrive at what may be called the anatomy of the pose.

But discussions as to his right to be

described as a sculptor who chose to give himself up to painting, or as a painter who had all the qualifications to become a master of sculpture, are a little futile. He was a great artist and he proved his powers in both forms of practice. What is more material is that people should learn to do justice to his greatness, and should try to estimate at its proper worth everything that he did. To scoff at his art, as the unthinking are ready to do, is utter folly; to say that he has no place in art history, as a certain school of critics are in the habit of asserting, is merely stupid prejudice; he will in years to come, when the memories of his wonderful personality have died away, be accepted on his work alone as one of the noblest teachers of the fundamental principles of the best and purest type of æstheticism. His time has

not yet arrived; had he lived three or four centuries ago he would be honoured now as a master. Because he was a man of the nineteenth century our familiarity with him has bred, if not actually contempt, at least a habit of undervaluing him which is almost as unreasonable.

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